India's Record in Non-Proliferation

323. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRASEKAR REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether some countries have praised India's record in non-proliferation;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether some countries have criticized India's present status of non-proliferation; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): (a) to (d) India shares the objective of WMD non-proliferation and has an impeccable record. Several countries have appreciated this record and regard India as a partner against WMD proliferation. They have made public statements to this effect. These include US, Russia, France, UK and Japan. President Bush conveyed his appreciation on India's strong commitment to preventing WMD proliferation in the Joint Statement of July 18, 2005; France has appreciated India's strong commitment to preventing WMD proliferation during the visit of PM in September 2005 and India and Russia have agreed to cooperate bilaterally as well as through appropriate multilateral forum to address the threat posed by proliferation. India and Japan have also agreed to work as partners against proliferation. However, some countries are still critical of India's position on the NPT. We have explained our position that we cannot sign the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state.

Increase in the number of passports issued by RPOs

324. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is steep increase in the number of passport issued in various Regional Passport Offices in the country,

(b) if so, the details of the number of passports being issued every year from the last five years;

(c) whether it is also a fact *thai* the staff strength at the RPOs *are* not increased in tune with the increasing work load: